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TAGS: [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#) [KU](#) [AEC](#) [FR](#)  
SUBJECT: FRENCH ACTIVITIES IN THE GULF

REF: PARIS 1417

Classified By: Classified by A/DCM Kathleen H. Allegrone for Reasons 1.  
4 b and d.

11. (C) The French Presidency's Counselor for North Africa and the Middle East, Nicolas Galey, discussed French activities in the Arabian Gulf with PolMinCouns and poloff on October 22. Galey said President Sarkozy will visit Saudi Arabia November 17 to 19 to highlight the importance of this bilateral relationship. Saudi Arabia will be the only stop on this trip. The Government of France (GOF) has not yet decided who will accompany Sarkozy on the trip, or whether business leaders will be included: however, the trip will certainly include meetings with King Abdullah.

UAE: FRENCH PRESSING FOR CIVILIAN NUCLEAR CONTRACT  
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12. (C) The trip is part of Sarkozy's effort to establish strong relations with Gulf countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where France opened a military base earlier in 12009. The GOF is strongly advocating for the French company Areva, which is competing to supply the UAE with civilian nuclear power equipment. Galey said a South Korean bid is currently favored to win the contract, although the GOF feels the Koreans are offering an unproven proto-type of antiquated technology that is not as safe as their own, per reftel. Galey said most other Gulf countries have also expressed interest in pursuing civilian nuclear programs. The GOF would require any country it supplied with equipment to sign a document of cooperation to help prevent unintended use of the system.

KUWAIT: POSSIBLY BUYING RAFALES  
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13. (SBU) Galey said Kuwait has also shown recent signs of interest in defense cooperation with France. The Kuwaiti Defense Minister and first Vice Prime Minister Sheik Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah recently told the GOF that his country is interested in buying Rafale fighter jets. Al-Sabah said Kuwait hoped for an offer very soon and that it would be studied very seriously. Sarkozy traveled to Kuwait in February and announced that France would pursue this contract in the traditional stronghold for U.S. military sales.  
RIVKIN